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SUBJECT: ESTONIA: NOMINATION FOR 2009 SECRETARY'S
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD

REF: STATE 99729

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. Embassy Tallinn is pleased to nominate Sergeant-Major Jaune Engel for the 2009 Secretary's International Women of Courage (IWOC) Award. As a member of the Estonian Defense Forces ('ESTCOY-4') unit deployed in southern Afghanistan, Jaune Engel has shown remarkable courage by volunteering to serve in Afghanistan and maintaining her steadfast commitment to serving her country even after being severely wounded in a rocket attack. Jaune Engel has emerged as symbol of triumph in the face of extreme personal adversity. She represents personal strength and Estonia's unwavering support for the global war on terrorism.

¶2. (U) Embassy Tallinn is pleased to nominate Sergeant-Major Jaune Engel, a nurse assigned to the ESTCOY-4 unit, for the 2009 Secretary's International Women of Courage Award. The following information is provided as requested in reftel.

¶3. (U) Biographic information:

Name: Jaune Engel
Title: Sergeant Major in the Estonian Defense Forces (EDF).
Sergeant Major Engel serves as a nurse in the EDF.
Date of Birth: April 8, 1973
Citizenship: Estonian
Address, Telephone, and Email: Madala 24-13, Tallinn Estonia,
+372-529-1257, jaunee@hotmail.com
Passport Number: K3326621

¶4. (U) Justification: Estonia has contributed to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) since 2003. Approximately 140 Estonian troops are currently deployed as part of the United Kingdom-led Task Force that conducts both combat and reconstruction operations in the province of Helmand in southern Afghanistan. Helmand is by far one of, if not the most, dangerous provinces in Afghanistan 'the epicenter of opium production and a stronghold for insurgents and drug lords alike.' Taliban fighters have long used the mountains of northern Helmand as a staging base for terrorist actions against ISAF troops. Estonia is one of the few NATO Allies willing to insert their troops in this perilous territory. ESTCOY-4, Jaune Engel's unit, patrolled regularly in northern Helmand. All members of the unit took part in unit operations; Nurse Jaune Engel was no exception.

On June 23, 2007, Camp Bastion, where the ESTCOY-4 was based, came under rocket attack from insurgent forces. The Estonian unit received the worst of the attack; two Estonian soldiers were killed instantly and four were wounded. One of the rockets exploded close to Jaune Engel, critically wounding her. She awoke in a field hospital to discover she had lost half of her right leg and was unable to see from her right

eye. The attack was especially poignant for Estonians as it happened on their Victory Day, a holiday that commemorates the heroic sacrifices of Estonians during their Independence War in 1919-1920. This was also the first fatalities Estonia had suffered since joining the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

British forces medivaced Jaune Engel to England for immediate treatment. It was soon apparent that Jaune Engel would face a long and difficult recovery. Given the severity of her injuries, the Estonian Minister of Defense formally requested the U.S. Department of Defense accept Nurse Engel into a U.S. military medical facility for treatment. In November 2007, Jaune Engel traveled to Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, DC to complete her prosthetics and undergo rehabilitation for her amputated lower right leg. In a meeting with Ambassador prior to her departure, Nurse Engel showed her spirited approach to adversity. She told Ambassador that her chief desire in receiving treatment in the United States was to be able to return to active military service so that she could return to Afghanistan and complete her mission. She remained at Walter Reed for nine months. During that time, she underwent challenging physical rehabilitation at the Military Advanced Training Center for Soldier Amputees.

Before volunteering to join the EDF as a medical specialist, Nurse Engel spent 12 years at the Estonian Cancer Center in the surgery department. In 2006, after one and a half years in the EDF Medical Services Corps, Jaune volunteered to take part in Estonian's mission to Afghanistan. She deployed as the nurse for ESTCOY-4, a motorized infantry company, and arrived in Afghanistan in May 2007. According to Nurse Engel, she was motivated to join EDF because she felt the

need to do something more with her life and thought the military offered the challenge she was seeking.

Publicly and privately Nurse Engel has emphasized that, despite her injuries, she does not regret her decision to volunteer for military service. Now back in Estonia, she is working on a comparative analysis of U.S. and British military medical systems and services for injured soldiers. Based on this analysis, she is looking at ways the EDF can improve its treatment of casualties (e.g. establishing support groups for injured soldiers).

Sergeant-Major Jaune Engel's remarkable courage and commitment to service in the face of her life altering injuries makes her our clear choice for the 2009 International Women of Courage Award.

¶5. (U) Sergeant-Major Jaune Engel has been notified of her nomination for this award.

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